

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Quarterly Meeting – July 7-9, 2004
Federal Building
St. Maries, ID**

July 7, 2004

RULES

Public Hearing

Chairman Nancy Hadley called the public hearing to order at 7:00 pm. She introduced Commissioners Marcus Gibbs, Cameron Wheeler, and Director Steve Huffaker and welcomed new Commissioners Gary Power of the Salmon Region and Dr. Wayne Wright from the Magic Valley Region. Commissioners Alex Irby and John Watts were absent. Staff introductions were made, the Director gave an overview of the Agenda for July 8 and 9, and the hearing was opened for public comment.

Jim Hagedorn, President of Concerned Sportsmen of Idaho (CSI), Viola, expressed his concern with the Department's five-year plan (Compass). He feels that the public was not given enough time to comment. He stated that the Department had more than three years to work on the plan, but the public had less than one month to review and respond. He stated that sportsmen need more time to respond. He pointed out that sportsmen are the Department's customers, and they pay the fees for the Department's programs. He expressed that the Department should be very careful moving forward with respect to managing endangered species.

Ed Lindahl, Moscow, also expressed his concerns with Compass. He believes it is a major policy change that will affect funding and political control of the Department. He expressed concern that federal money will be diverted to non-harvested game programs and entities, that it will be difficult to get State funds, and that it will slow the Department's decision-making ability. He suggested transferring control of non-harvested game to the Office of Species Conservation and to transfer control of rare plants to the Department of Agriculture or Parks and Recreation. Mr. Lindahl challenged the Commission to give more time for input and review of the plan.

Keith Woods, Lake Coeur d'Alene Anglers Association, Rathdrum, expressed his appreciation for efforts to keep Chinook in the lake. He is concerned that too many small fish are being kept and that there is over fishing of the lake. Mr. Woods doesn't feel that enforcement efforts are adequate on the lake. He doesn't advocate limiting the size of Chinook being caught nor does he want people to be "harassed." However, he believes that enforcement should be more visible on the water. Mr. Woods also discussed issues he experienced with the computer licensing system. He wasn't able to redeem his receipts from his online purchase on Memorial Day because machines were down at his local vendor and at the regional office. He was finally able to get his license at a vendor in St. Maries. He would

like to see improvements in the system.

Richard Good, representing disabled veterans, spoke on road closures in the Panhandle. He presented statistics on the miles of roads in the area versus the number of miles accessible for the disabled. He is concerned that the Department has asked for more road closures. He feels that the current and additional proposed road closures prevent the disabled from being able to hunt.

Nate Helm, Executive Director of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, Idaho, gave an overview and history of the SFW. The organization was formed in Utah, and there are currently five chapters in Idaho with membership expected to be in excess of 4,000 by the end of the year. The three priorities of the SFW are to promote: 1) active management of fish and wildlife. They want to see the Department of Fish and Game have and use all tools available to be active managers of Idaho's wildlife. 2) better communication and more transparency between sportsmen and the Fish & Game. SFW would like to see sportsmen more engaged and committed to sharing the burden of decision making. 3) cooperation among all organizations and agencies to ensure success. Currently of special interest to the SFW are the issues of conservation tags and the mule deer initiative.

Tom Morris, Benewah County, expressed concern over wolves. Mr. Morris, who was chairman of the Wildlife Council for several years, said wolves are all over the area and are playing havoc with big game.

John Walters, representing the Avery Property Owners Association, began by thanking Department members for their work on Senator Crapo's elk summit and Dave Spicer for taking part in the 15-year plan for the Forest Service. He also commended Officer Jerry Hugo who aided in a drowning incident on the St. Joe River over the 4th of July weekend. Mr. Walters expressed concern about Compass, stating that if the IDFG gets any funds from the State General Fund it will change the entire Commission and Department. He stated that the Department would then owe fiduciary duty to environmental organizations rather than to those who buy hunting and fishing licenses. He does not feel that the Office of Species Conservation should have any control over any fish or game in Idaho and that the Commission should declare sovereignty over all game in the state. He commented that the wolf has taken many millions of dollars out of the Idaho economy due to depredation and that natives don't want them. Mr. Walters believes the Department should help in the effort to maintain RS2477 right of ways for access. Commenting on the issue of access for disabled hunters, Mr. Walters said that the Americans with Disabilities Act is ignored in North Idaho. If roads are closed, the public is locked out of all activities on those lands, which impacts the economy. In closing, Mr. Walters stated that the Commission direction should include not only game management but also active recruitment of habitat and that lack of logging and lack of forest disturbance is as detrimental as the wolf.

Tom Morris commented that he is not down on the local Fish and Game authorities and that they are doing a good job.

Chairman Hadley thanked the public for attending and for their comments. She reminded those present that there would be a picnic Thursday evening, July 8, at Cherry Bend Park at 6:30 p.m. The hearing adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

July 8, 2004

The Commission meeting convened at 8:00 a.m. with Commissioners Hadley, Gibbs, Wright, Power, and Wheeler present and Commissioners Irby and Watts absent.

MISCELLANEOUS

Agenda Changes

A budget modification was added as 6c. under the Consent Calendar. The Financial Report and Budget Modifications were removed from the Consent Calendar. For the benefit of the two new Commissioners, it was decided to have Steve Barton present the Financial Report in more depth and to address the Budget Modifications at that time. Agenda item 17 was moved to Friday morning. Agenda item 23., Hunter Education, was moved to July 8 (due to lack of Internet connection, the information was not presented). There was a change to the Minutes from the April meeting on Page 52 to reflect the date of January 31 in the second paragraph, motion 04-52. The Fisheries presentation, agenda item 24., will not include speakers Sharon Kiefer or Tom Frew.

Review of Public Comment

Chairman Hadley noted that there were several comments on Compass. Director Huffaker explained that agenda item 15. would include a presentation of the proposed modifications to the strategic plan based on the public comments received. Chairman Hadley further noted that the Department needs to act on the problems with the IWILD system and follow up in future meetings. Commissioner Gibbs requested that the Commission follow up with Mr. Good who spoke on behalf of disabled hunters. The Director stated that the Regional Supervisors would work with him and with the Forest Service to address Mr. Good's concerns. Chairman Hadley asked that follow-up discussion on this topic be added to the agenda for future meetings to explore opportunities to address the issue.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Topics in the Director's Report to the Commission included:

Budget Restructuring: The Administration Bureau will be restructuring the budgeting process so that the Department has a budget for management direction that can be easily understood and

manipulated. The Administration Bureau will then package the budget for the Division of Financial Management and the Governor's Budget Office. This process will be more conducive to management by the Commission.

Charges from the Controller's Office: There has been an increase from \$150,000 per year in the past to close to \$500,000 per year this year due to the implementation of the Activity Based Costing system, the numeric code system used to track activities. Jim Lau will be working to refine this system so that it captures just information that is necessary to track how the Department is doing business and cut the charges by \$150,000 - \$200,000 per year.

Sage grouse issue: The population assessment was finished, and the framework team delivered their report to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. They asked the USFWS to extend the comment deadline to allow for more time to finalize the State plan. They declined as they are on a court-ordered timeline and need to keep the process on track for a December decision. However, they should continue to take input on the issue given all the attention the pending decision is receiving.

Duck Season: There has been a liberal duck season of 107 days for the last several years. Populations are on the edge, and the Department may need to move to a more conservative season. The Department is taking comment on what the public would like to see if it is necessary to scale back from 107 to 86 days and potential zones and splits.

WAFWA: The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting agenda is set. It will likely be one of the bigger events in recent years.

MOU with USFS: In 1983 IDFG and the US Forest Service signed an operating Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation between the agencies. Three years later, a state law was passed to allow the Department to help the Forest Service enforce road closures. The 1983 MOU did not provide for that, so there is now a one-page revision to allow the Department to help the Forest Service enforce road closures and to allow the Forest Service to help the Department with elk management. That document was signed by Jerry Connelly as Secretary of the Commission, but an attorney asked for proof that it was a Commission action. A review of the Commission minutes did not show any action. There is no case law regarding this, but the appropriate solution would be to have the Commission approve having the Director re-sign the MOU on behalf of the Commission as Secretary.

04-65 Commissioner Wheeler moved and Commissioner Gibbs seconded the motion TO GIVE THE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY TO SIGN THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

MISCELLANEOUS

Commissioner Gibbs asked if more details about those who received Super Tags could be made public and posted on the web. Dallas Burkhalter, Deputy Attorney General, explained that the Public Records Law has privacy protection for people who purchase licenses. It allows only the person's name and town to be published. The Department did send out a news release that contained the name and town of each winner. *The Idaho Statesman* did publish the names and the states of those individuals. They are also on the IDFG web site.

Commissioner Gibbs passed on a request from Commissioner Irby to postpone agenda item 15., a discussion of the strategic plan, until Commissioner Irby could be present and until the new

commissioners have time to become familiar with the plan. Chairman Hadley suggested leaving the item on the agenda with the intent to discuss whether to take action or postpone.

Commission Reports

Southeast Region: Commissioner Gibbs reported that spring moisture has helped alleviate the drought conditions, and stream flows are better for Southeast Idaho. He reported on vendor concerns and problems with the point of sale license system. Region staff are starting to work on the mule deer initiative.

Upper Snake Region: Commissioner Wheeler reported that people are very frustrated with the IWILD system. Region staff has worked hard on the mule deer initiative. An interesting finding with respect to the mortality studies on mule deer fawns revealed that some of those deer migrated from the lower end of the South Fork to Yellowstone Park. Clark, Fremont, and Teton counties are working together to raise funds for bear-proof garbage containers; they are hopeful they may also get some federal and state funds. He reported that the Region set a new State record for a Splake; it was three times the old State record. The Commissioner reported on efforts to trap and move geese and noted three depredation incidents with elk and deer.

Panhandle Region: Commissioner Hadley reported that the Kootenai Valley Resource initiative is getting closer to finishing the wetlands conservation strategy document. The Region has had presentations on wildlife corridors in conjunction with improvements to Highway 95. Commissioner Hadley suggested evaluating what other states are doing with wildlife corridors at the upcoming Western Association (WAFWA) conference. The Commissioner has been working on the agenda for WAFWA. Lake Pend Oreille netting is being suspended; Ned Horner will work on redoing the trap nets and determining how to make the best use of the information from the project. Commissioner Hadley assisted Regional Supervisor Chip Corsi in giving Employee of the Year awards at the regional staff meeting. The region is heavily involved in the Spokane River re-licensing, which affects Coeur d'Alene Lake, the lower St. Joe River, and the lower Coeur d'Alene River. They are hoping to get a good collaborative settlement that will benefit fish and wildlife.

The Region has a new boat launch at Rose Lake. Good progress is being made on the new water life center in Sandpoint.

Salmon Region: Commissioner Power reported on the bull trout-tagging program. On the Middle Fork and the main Salmon on the upper ends of the system, chukar numbers are down considerably from where they were a year ago, but great as you move down the system. Lamb numbers for bighorn sheep look really good. Issues that people have brought to him include the wolf issue -- Salmon is home to the Central Idaho Wolf Coalition. Most people would like to see a hunting season. Another major issue was the Salmon season; there were Salmon seasons in other parts of the state, but not in Salmon. The four inches of precipitation since May 1 has really changed things for the Region; range conditions are wonderful.

Magic Valley Region: Commissioner Wright reported that drought conditions in the Region have hindered fishing opportunities. Magic Reservoir closed last week; Mormon and Little Camas have also been closed. Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir remains open because they cannot drain all of it. The one bright spot is Anderson Ranch Reservoir, which is only down about four inches and is producing 14-16 inch kokanee. The Region has had 8-10 pound Walleye caught in Oakley Reservoir. The Big Wood River and Silver Creek are bright spots in the Region after two sub-standard years. The early summer and spring rain has been a great help with the habitat. There was excellent survival rate for the deer population over the winter; the Region tagged 27 fawns and 21 survived. Region staff continues to work on sage and sharp tail grouse surveys; they are reporting above average production. Extensive surveys looking for mountain quail and historic habitat continue; none have been found so far. They have observed relatively good numbers of chukars in the Jarbidge/Bruneau desert.

Commissioner Hadley suggested having a half-day orientation workshop at the next Commission meeting to be held on November 18-19 and requested Commissioner Wheeler's assistance in planning the orientation.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The July Consent Calendar contained the minutes of the April 21-23 and May 25, 2004, Commission meetings. One correction was made to Motion 04-52 changing the closing date for the season from January 21 to January 31.

04-66 Commissioner Wheeler moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 21-23, 2004 MEETING AS CORRECTED AND TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 25, 2004, MEETING. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

FISCAL

Budget Review and History/Financial Report

Steve Barton, Assistant to the Director, provided the Commissioners with a history of the budget and funding. The Department is funded half with license funds, half with federal funds. The federal funds are for the most part allocated to specific contractual obligations. Through May 2004, revenue is close to estimates; expenditures were slightly under estimates. Funds are invested in the State Treasury. The Department has \$1.5 million invested in the long-term cash fund to maximize return.

The budget stabilization fund was established by the Commission to set aside approximately 10 percent of the license fund revenue. There is almost \$3 million in the budget stabilization fund. The Department is at a point where the license increase from 2000 is not enough to meet ongoing demands, and there is a need to start looking at expenditures from the budget stabilization fund for ongoing operations in FY 2005 and 2006.

The fleet management fund is used to finance the fleet operations out of which all the Department's fleet equipment is purchased. At the end of May, that fund totaled \$4 million. The Department will purchase major vehicle fleet and other equipment at the start of FY '05. The auction value of fleet vehicles has increased. Overall, the Department has met expectations with the new fleet system and is in the process of switching over most motorized vehicles to the internal fleet system, which includes fixed leasing cost, and per mile or per hour variable cost. Conversion to the fleet system has been a phased approach. It will take 8-10 years to get all the equipment into the fleet cycle. Thus far, the system has proven successful in reducing the number of vehicles overall.

Set aside funds are license funds required to be used for certain purposes, e.g. habitat, winter feeding, depredation control, salmon/steelhead, non-game, etc. Depredation control is negative; the Department is working to reduce the requirement for big game damage claim payments. For the most part, actuals are close to estimates. The largest area of variance was in resident tags.

IWILD System Update

The Director and Assistant to the Director have met with GTECH on several issues. Fine tuning of satellite antennae on each vendor location is ongoing. Storms have affected some of the satellite dishes causing some individual systems to go down. GTECH customer service reps are in the field fine-tuning every satellite dish. Severe storm disturbances at the main satellite location in Maryland have caused system issues. If the system goes down, there will be a mechanism for customers to get a manual license. GTECH will also address installation issues and ensure that there is a redundant system.

Budget Modifications

Accept \$51,000 from the Department of Agriculture to allow the Department to further integrate wildlife biologists into the farm bill program.

Accept \$135,000 from the Department of Transportation to fund the I95 highway realignment project.

04-67 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded a motion TO APPROVE THE TWO BUDGET MODIFICATIONS AS PRESENTED. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Bighorn Sheep Tags

In its 16-year history the auction tag program has returned 95 percent of the sales tag price or \$809,950 to the Department. The lottery tag was modified in 1991 and implemented in 1992. The Department gets 75 percent; the Idaho Chapter of FNAWS takes 25 percent to cover the sales and distribution cost. The Department has benefited by \$396,149 most of which has been used for sheep management, primarily at the wildlife health lab in Caldwell for bighorn sheep research. The lottery provides approximately \$33,000 per year; the auction tag provides approximately \$53,000 per year.

04-68 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO RELEASE THE TWO BIGHORN SHEEP TAGS FOR THE AUCTION AND LOTTERY (Appendix 37, Exhibit 21). The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

REPORTS

Mule Deer Ecology Study

Mark Hurley, Senior Wildlife Research Biologist, presented an overview of research results from a study initiated in 1997 to better understand the role of predation and the efficacy of predator management for increasing mule deer populations (Appendix 37, Exhibit 22). Two research questions were explored: 1) what is the difference in survival rates in mule deer under different predator management programs; 2) will removing predators increase mule deer populations over a large area. Dr. Oz Garton (University of Idaho) was consulted for statistical analysis of mule deer response data.

The project, using an experimental design, was initiated in southeastern Idaho in 8 areas assigned as either treatment or control. Mule deer populations across all 8 study sites were monitored annually with intensive monitoring of 200 individual deer (fawns and adults) conducted in Units 56 and 73A. Results indicate that a small increase in survival was attributable to coyote and mountain lion

removal efforts if alternate prey (small mammals) and weather conditions were favorable. Winter weather and spring-summer precipitation were the most important factors affecting mule deer dynamics.

Mule Deer Initiative Update

Brad Compton, Wildlife Game Manager, presented an update on the Department's Mule Deer Initiative to improve populations and hunting opportunities in southern Idaho (Appendix 37, Exhibit 23). The Mule Deer Initiative consists of three components: habitat management, population management (including predator management), and public outreach/involvement. Specific management actions are currently being identified and implemented in the Southeast Region and portions of the Upper Snake and Magic Valley Regions, including management of Aspen habitat, winter range, and invasive species. A wildlife biologist is being hired to work specifically on the Mule Deer Initiative. The Regions are developing the mission and goals in a collaborative effort. A final Mule Deer Initiative working document should be completed by October.

Direction on Expenditure of Wildlife Services

By statute, the Department provides \$100,000 to Wildlife Services for the Animal Damage Control account. Half of this is used as a proportional allocation across the state. Since 1997, when the contribution was increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000, the Commission has directed the other \$50,000 in the account, which has been used to fund the mule deer ecology study. The Department would like to continue to allocate this money to control coyotes on low mule deer populations for at least one more year.

04-69 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded a motion TO CONTINUE THE WILDLIFE SERVICES \$50,000 STATEWIDE ALLOCATION AND THE \$50,000 ALLOCATION FOR COYOTE REMOVAL IN UNITS 73, 73a, 56, 72, AND 76 FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR (Appendix 37, Exhibit 24). The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

White-Tailed Deer Update

Jim Hayden, Regional Wildlife Manager, presented information on current efforts to update the 1998 White-tailed Deer Plan (Appendix 37, Exhibit 25). The update is intended to maintain or improve hunter opportunity, address management of white-tailed deer where they are present, identify direction for southern white-tailed deer populations, improve data on white-tails, and set direction for white-tailed deer habitat management. Currently, white-tail populations are good overall; buck quality is very high; hunter crowding problems have diminished particularly in the Clearwater Region; and hunter satisfaction is very high. By late August a draft of the updated plan will be ready for public review, and the plan will be presented to the Commission at the November meeting.

LEGISLATION

2005 Legislative Proposals

Steve Barton, Assistant to the Director, provided an overview of proposed legislation for the next session to accomplish the following (Appendix 37, Exhibit 26):

- 1) Give the Commission authority to adjust fees by rule with a section that would increase fees. The last fee increase was effective in 2000; the Legislature was informed at that time that the Department would make another request to be effective in 2006. The second section would give the Commission the authority to set fees by rule, which would then need approval by the Legislature. The intent is to avoid having infrequent but large fee increases by allowing for minor adjustment in fees to accommodate for inflation, employee compensation, program modifications, etc.
- 2) Change the definition of flagrant violations.
- 3) Amend the trespass code adding that if a person retrieves wildlife from private property that does fall under the Department's trespass law.
- 4) Add revocation of trapping as a requirement for magistrates to report. They do not currently have to report a trapping revocation.
- 5) Add Chinook Salmon on the current steelhead buyers' license; it would say steelhead and Chinook salmon to allow staff to track selling of Chinook salmon.
- 6) Give the Director more flexibility in ramping hunts or seasons down by reducing bag or possession limits rather than having to simply close seasons.

The final version of the proposals is due September 28. Mr. Barton will get the proposals out for Commission review prior to the August conference call. There was consensus on these proposals.

Commissioner Wheeler asked about the Eastern Idaho winter feeding program and commented that there are a few key people in Eastern Idaho that should be part of that process. Mr. Unsworth will follow up.

FISCAL

Regional Office Construction and Funding

Steve Barton updated the Commission on the status of the three new regional offices in Lewiston, Jerome, and Salmon. The IRS requires that the Commission approve the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation's action of issuing tax-exempt notes not to exceed \$6.5 million for construction of those three offices. The Department will lease those facilities from the Foundation and then accept ownership at the end of the 20-year lease. CSDI, a professional construction management firm, will provide oversight throughout construction.

04-70 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE IDAHO FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION'S RESOLUTION TO

FINANCE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE THREE NEW OFFICE FACILITIES IN LEWISTON, JEROME, AND SALMON (Appendix 37, Exhibit 27). The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

REPORTS

Commission Support for Governor's Effort on RS2477

Director Huffaker presented the draft language, which the Governor's office has approved:

WHEREAS ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS IS ESSENTIAL TO IDAHOAN'S ENJOYMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES, AND WHEREAS ACCESS LIMITS OPPORTUNITIES FOR HUNTING, FISHING, AND OTHER OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PURSUITS, AND WHEREAS TOURISM AN OUTDOOR RECREATION ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF IDAHO'S ECONOMY, THE IDAHO FISH AND GAME COMMISSION APPLAUDS THE EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNOR, HIS STAFF, AND THE GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP A PROCESS FOR IDAHO TO RESOLVE RS2477 CLAIMS. THE COMMISSION ENCOURAGES THE GOVERNOR TO CONTINUE THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE.

Commissioner Wheeler passed on a request from Commissioner Watts that discussion regarding RS2477 be postponed until the November meeting. The Commissioners agreed that further discussion regarding Department involvement with the RS2477 issue could take place at the November meeting.

04-71 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Gibbs seconded the motion TO ENDORSE THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE PROCESS ON RS2477. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Strategic Plan Update

Tracey Trent, Chief, Natural Resource Policy Bureau, presented a review of the public comments on the Department's strategic plan and the recommended changes (Appendix 37, Exhibit 28).

For the benefit of the new commissioners, Mr. Trent explained that the process of developing the strategic plan started three years ago and included interviews and focus groups with key elected officials, hunters, anglers, non-consumptive users, people with an economic interest in wildlife and landowners. A public survey was conducted of 7,000 households; 3,000 responses were received. The information from this research was used to identify 13 major issues, which were analyzed and summarized. Strategic planning workshops were conducted in all regions and over 1,000 goal statements were generated by participants.

The document was prepared and sent out for public review for the month of May and into part of June -- 153 comments were generated by 41 groups including sportsmen and fishing

groups, the Farm Bureau, and others representing a broad range of perspectives. A general assessment of the comments was prepared for the Commissioners.

Mr. Trent reported that many respondents expressed thanks for the opportunity to have input and for the Department's work in developing the plan. He clarified that 2,000 individuals received the draft plan. These were people who had participated in some part of the process of developing the plan, such as focus groups, interviews, or strategic planning workshops. It was also on the web site and was sent to public agencies and a list of about 100 sportsmen's groups. The Director reiterated that the draft plan was available to anyone who wanted to see it and comment. Staff will work on the questions for future discussion and will get a clean copy with public comments incorporated to Commissioners for review.

Commissioner Gibbs noted that some public comment included questions over why the Department, rather than Department of Agriculture, is handling rare plants. The Director explained that the Department has expertise in the Endangered Species Act and in plants, and has the data. Chairman Hadley clarified that while Fish and Game houses staff who work on plant species, the Department does not fund them. They are funded primarily by grants and contracts from federal agencies.

The Commissioners agreed to postpone endorsement of the strategic plan until questions have been answered and the new Commissioners have had an opportunity to review and understand the plan. Mr. Trent will mail out a revised copy reflecting the public comments.

Fisheries Economic Survey

Virgil Moore, Chief, Fisheries Bureau, presented an overview of the survey, the results, and how the information will be used going forward (Appendix 37, Exhibit 29). 48,000 surveys were mailed; 1,500 per region. Over half were returned. The sample of 48,000 individuals who received surveys was pulled from the 400,000 individual license buyers in 2003 tracked by the Department's license buyer database. License sales have declined about 10 percent over the last three years in both resident and non-resident sales. Mr. Moore shared the results of dollars spent by individual anglers in Idaho in 2003, how those dollars were spent and where they were spent by region, fishery, and county.

The next step is to create a series of brochures that show the information broken out by county. These brochures will be given to each county. The brochures should be done within the next month to six weeks. The Bureau will also write technical reports and create additional presentations.

The survey cost was \$125,000. The last survey was done in 1994 and previously 1984. This information will be shared with the Department of Commerce, Rural Development, County Commissioners, local Chambers of Commerce, IACI and other groups who will be able to use the

data. Commissioners were given a copy of the survey as well as tables showing economic activity by region and county (Appendix 37, Exhibit 30).

The Department derives economic benefit by increasing the number of anglers. Increasing license sales benefits both the Department and the state. The challenge is to make fishing a convenient alternative for busy urban families.

Angler Recruitment

Roger Fuhrman, Chief, Communications Bureau, presented information on the Department's efforts to attract more anglers and increase license sales (Appendix 37, Exhibit 31). License sales have dropped off 8 percent since they peaked in 1999-2000 even though Idaho's population has increased significantly. Research shows that each year, about 20 percent of license buyers drop out. A 2001 nation-wide survey done by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service showed that 56 percent of the anglers surveyed said they did not fish as much as they would like for two main reasons: not enough time and family or work obligations.

The Department is focusing on how to make fishing more appealing. The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation received a grant from the federal government to create a campaign called Water Works Wonders campaign. After much research, they found that families, especially kids, are extremely important to retention and recruitment. The "Take Me Fishing" theme emphasizes that fishing is fun. It was used in developing a series television spots focused on where to go fishing, where to go fishing with kids, and how to get them started and interested. The series is running throughout the summer in every market in the state and in Spokane. The series ties in well with the strategic plan to provide more education about fishing and aquatic resources. Mr. Fuhrman showed several of the video features to the Commissioners.

Wildlife Monitoring Plan, Copeland Highway 95 Realignment

Wayne Wakkinen, Senior Wildlife Research Biologist, presented an update on the Highway 95 realignment project and specifically the wildlife monitoring plan that is associated with that project (Appendix 37, Exhibit 32).

The project focuses mainly on human safety issues, but there are wildlife concerns that it addresses as well. The project is administered by the Idaho Department of Transportation but is funded by federal highway money. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is involved, and they issued a biological opinion for the project. They have specified that the project is to develop and implement a monitoring plan to assess wildlife movement across the highway and to implement a monitoring program to look at the design and placement of wildlife crossing structures.

The Transportation Department has asked the Fish and Game to conduct the monitoring program. Highlights of the program include analysis of road kill, winter track surveys, remote

cameras to track use of wildlife crossing structures, GPS collars to track bear movement patterns and habitat use, and fragmentation of wildlife with the larger highway footprint.

MISCELLANEOUS

Executive Session

04-72 Commissioner Gibbs moved and Commissioner Wright seconded the motion TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO IDAHO CODE 67-2345(1)(C) PERTAINING TO LAND ACQUISITIONS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

The session began at 4:00 pm and ended at 5:02 pm. No official action was taken.

04-73 Commissioner Wheeler moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT'S RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE ASHTON HATCHERY PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND THE BIG COTTONWOOD WMA EASEMENT (Appendix 37, Exhibit 33). The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

July 9, 2004

The Commission meeting convened at 8:03 a.m. with Commissioners Hadley, Gibbs, Wright, Power, and Wheeler present and Commissioners Irby and Watts absent.

REPORTS

Fee Increase and Budget Proposal

The Director reminded the Commission that the Department had informed the Legislature it would be seeking approval in the 2005 session for the ability to set fees within a range and an initial increment that would allow the Department to meet increased expenses and new program needs. Any significant fee increases or major new programs would go back to the Legislature for approval. The Department needs the means to address inflation, cost of employee compensation and other uncontrollable costs that are handled for other State agencies through the appropriations process but that the Fish and Game Department is not able to do through the license process. The Director asked the Commission for their direction on the size of the increment to seek in the 2005 legislative session and whether the Department should begin implementing the strategic direction in the budget.

Steve Barton presented the budget proposal (Appendix 37, Exhibit 34). At the June Department Operations meeting, bureau chiefs and regional supervisors reviewed the strategic plan and discussed what it might take to implement some of the objectives from the plan. Mr. Barton detailed the uncontrollable cost increases – change in employee compensation, operating expense, inflation, Controller and Treasurer, and increases in Fee in lieu of taxes – that must be met by the proposed fee increase going forward. He also presented the recommended budget

increases for continued implementation of the Access Yes! program, improvements in conservation enforcement, enhancements in Mule Deer management, and improvements in public involvement and communications.

The increase in the budget to be funded by increased license fees is approximately \$1.2 million. The fee increase proposal would entail a two-part piece of legislation – part one would involve a specific fee increase, effective in FY 2006, and part two would provide authority for the Commission to set fees by rule, resulting in a new “not to exceed” fee schedule. The Department’s recommendation is to seek a 13 to 14 percent fee increase effective at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2006 to allow the Department to maintain and enhance programs and maintain the budget stabilization fund. There would still be several “tight” years where it would be necessary to use the budget stabilization fund to maintain operations until that fund could be replenished.

Commissioner Gibbs asked if there was an alternative fee increase plan in the event the Legislature did not approve the Department’s proposal. The Director advised that the Department go in with the proposal of what is needed and then revise if the Legislature does not approve it. Chairman Hadley recommended that if the plan is not approved that the Department go year-by-year to seek approval of fee increases.

Staff and the potential sponsors of the legislation will work on the specific, detailed proposal for the fee increase legislation.

The Commission reached consensus on the FY 2006 budget and will review a summary on the August conference call.

Fisheries Workshop: Statewide Perspectives, Fish Population Dynamics
(Appendix 37, Exhibit 35)

Dan Schill, Fishery Research Manager, presented information on fisheries management in Idaho. The information is used to help educate sportsmen about the factors that affect fish populations and fish growth. The presentation covered growth rates, additions to fish population, and fish mortality. Both natural and fishing mortality were discussed. Natural mortality is responsible for most fish mortality and is the least understood by biologists and anglers alike. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission controls fishing mortality through sportfish regulations. Results of an angler workshop presented to Henry’s Lake sportsman was presented as an example of how we explain regulation options on high profile fisheries to Idaho sportsman. Mr. Schill also covered the impact

of exploitation on fish populations and explained the basis for biological and social regulations on fisheries.

Mark Gamblin, State Fishery Manager, presented information on warm water fish management programs. Warm water fisheries include bass (large-mouth and small mouth), catfish (channel and bullheads), and pan fish (crappie, bluegill, yellow perch). There is a growing constituency for warm water fisheries in Idaho. The interest, demand, and effort for warm water fisheries has doubled over

the past 20 years and is an important part of the Department's fisheries program. Mr. Gamblin covered population dynamics and the Department's management efforts.

Chip Corsi, Regional Supervisor, gave a brief overview of North Idaho lakes – Coeur d'Alene, Pend Oreille, and Priest Lakes and the history of the kokanee populations in those lakes. He introduced Ned Horner, Regional Fishery Manager for the Panhandle Region, who presented information on how fish populations are managed in Coeur d'Alene Lake to achieve management goals and how the Department has achieved success in managing the kokanee population in Coeur d'Alene Lake. The Department used an adaptive management approach using Fall Chinook salmon as a predator to restore a yield fishery for kokanee in Coeur d'Alene Lake while providing a limited fishery for trophy Chinook salmon as well.

Adjournment

The Commission meeting adjourned at 11:18 am.